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ABSTRACT

This document presents a report on the status of an experimental program of Independent Study and Contemporary University at the University of South Carolina. The program enables students to pursue either an individual or team project for up to 15-hours credit and to participate in group seminars and other activities designed to create an educational community. The program thus far has been extremely well received and appears to be beneficial to both students and faculty. Recommendations are made in the report concerning the structure of the program; faculty involvement in the program; orientation of faculty and students in the program; the student-faculty steering and selection committee; the student selection process; grading procedures; the amount of credit that may be earned; and program funding. (HS)

THE REPORT OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE IN ARTS AND SCIENCE APPOINTED BY DEAN NELSON TO EVALUATE THE PROGRAM OF CONTEMPORARY UNIVERSITY AND INDEPENDENT STUDY

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I. BACKGROUND

For the past two semesters the University has supported an experimental program of Independent Study and Contemporary University. Over sixty students and about forty faculty have been directly involved. This program has enabled some thirty students each semester both to pursue an individual or team project for up to fifteen hours credit and to participate in group seminars and other activities designed to create an educational community. The formulation and implementation of the project have fallen essentially under the heading of Independent Study. The task of building a new kind of academic community within the University structure has comprised the Contemporary University aspect of the experiment.

Not an honors program, the CU-Independent Study gives the selected participants an opportunity to utilize their own creative skills in areas which seem relevant to them. A semester's freedom from the traditional structure is provided under the guidance of a faculty member and, if participants so desire, within the body of a community of students. To widen the student's educational experiences, USC originally collaborated with two schools which also had a similar experiment funded by the Ford Foundation - the University of Massachusetts and Federal City College in Washington. While not an unalloyed success, the Contemporary University-Independent Study program has proven, after only a year's time, to be a valuable and rewarding academic experience for a wide range of student participants.

Curriculum innovation based on student need, a prominent feature of the Contemporary University program, is not new. Leading colleges in this country in the 1930's and 1940's were active in developing new dimensions of instruction which extended beyond typical departmental and course boundaries. Most of the colleges were small: Antioch, Bard, Bennington, Reed, St. John's (Annapolis), and Stephens. Only a few of the larger institutions were willing to attempt major innovations; of these, Chicago is best known. Some programs sought innovation through providing credit and emphasis in the performing arts or for creative and innovative approaches to traditional subject areas. All aimed at a high level of interaction and communication between student and tutor. Most programs described so far were geared to further enrichment of middle class and upper middle class students. Financial necessity shaped other innovative programs for students forced to work as a part of their attending college. During this same period integrated programs of work-study were found at colleges such as Berea and Fenn and expanded to include other schools during succeeding decades. A history of the work-study movement is found in Wilson and Lyons (1961).

A fundamental issue with regard to curriculum innovation and one raised in Contemporary University is in determining the appropriate role for the university in contemporary society. Ultra traditional conservatives such as Russell Kirk (1966) would return colleges to an earlier mold in which broad classical training would be provided to college students, but only the educationally elite. He would remove professional curricula and applied train-

ing from the typical college curriculum, placing it instead in other kinds of schools. At the other end of the continuum are the programs which see social relevance and involvement as the only meaningful contribution from today's colleges and universities. Some of the house plan and cluster college experiments have annual programs to this end. Other innovations have removed most formal degree requirements. Most colleges have programs which fall well between both extremes. In many instances innovation has been a very tentative dip into free electives, limited pass-fail grading, or, as at Brown University, an opportunity to extend concentration in one or several areas and an improved grading system.

The issues still unresolved at most universities and the basis of most objections to innovative curricula such as CU are related to the issue of the relevance of the academic programs to the needs of the individual and perhaps more importantly to the needs of contemporary society. Some professors feel that they must teach content without regard to student need, feeling that students are unable to determine effectively what their future needs will be. In some instances, there is the feeling that teaching to the needs of contemporary society will not produce needed change. Other reasons for maintaining highly structured curricula are more obscure.

In spite of the opposition from professional schools and other highly structured programs, there is a growing interest in

independent study which extends well beyond the previously held positions of a three hour course or as a part of a senior thesis. This is not uniformly so. Some of the most creative programming is found at schools such as M. I. T. Today's independent study, and a stated objective of CU, is viewed as a method for allowing the curriculum to be more relevant to the needs, talents, and interests of students involved. It is felt to extend beyond the tutorial system where there are regular individual meetings between student and instructor. The goal of such independent programs of study is to allow students to determine which issues are important to them, to formulate plans for the development of these ideas and to work on them with sufficient time to effect their completion. Most professors would accept independent study of this magnitude for work on a research project or some scholarly undertaking. Fewer are willing to permit academic credit being obtained for a semester spent in slum reclamation, civil rights activities, or in-depth observations of a political party at work. Most prefer a discrete unit of gradable work.

The origins of this experiment at South Carolina go back to a University Presidents' Conference early in 1969 when Dr. Jones discussed the concept with a graduate of the California Institute of Technology, Joseph Rhodes, Junior. Rhodes told President Jones that he had submitted a proposal to the Ford Foundation for the funding of such an experimental program. The President was interested and asked to be informed of Ford's response. Early in June,

Rhodes informed Dr. Jones that Ford had agreed to give $95,000.00 to three schools for one year, provided each school would set aside $5,000.00.

Although it was late in the day to implement such a program at South Carolina, the administration, strongly supported by some student government leaders, decided to participate for at least a trial semester. Dean Nelson was appointed chairman of a steering committee consisting of eight students and six faculty members. This committee was authorized to send letters to all returning students informing them of the program and giving them a deadline by which to submit proposals for the fall semester. From among over one hundred proposals the committee then selected twenty-five students to receive full-time credit, plus about half that number on a part-time basis to receive nine to three hours credit. Students from Arts and Science, Journalism, Business Administration and Engineering were involved. The participants from all three colleges were then asked to meet at the South Carolina campus July 25-27 in order to become aware of the objectives of the program and to learn ways of carrying out their projects.

Because of the shortness of time it was impossible to make new course recommendations to the faculty through the Curriculum and New Courses Committee. Consequently, the program was initiated without faculty approval by cooperation among the deans, department heads and faculty advisors of the participants. In most cases, each student was given six credits in two Anthropology classes

and then nine credits in his or her major field. The fact that (owing to the time problem) the faculty was not consulted about the program as well as the difficulty of fitting participants into "token" courses have caused significant irritation and resentment among some faculty members.

Each member of the program at USC had a faculty advisor especially chosen to help him work on the project. A few of the students were assigned advisors at the beginning of the semester, but most had the option of working with the professor, or professors in a number of cases, of their choice. The advisors were usually from the major field within which the project was concerned.

Participants had the option of turning in their finished work in any form that they wished - a paper, a novel, a movie, a series of seminars. The only stipulation was that it had to be a product whose merit could be evaluated by the advisor who was responsible for the difficult task of grading.

The whole program has been evaluated by an ad hoc committee appointed on 5 October by Dean Nelson. To this effect the committee has inquired into every aspect of the program. Early in December it recommended to Dean Nelson that the experiment of Independent Study and Contemporary University be continued for another semester. The reasons for this recommendation were the strong support for the project students and faculty advisors expressed in interviews. Also, it was felt that for such an experimental project a single semester with only one group of students involved was ina-

dequate for proper appraisal.

In response to this recommendation, the Curriculum and New Courses Committee proposed to the General Faculty in January the establishment for a semester of Independent Study 399 with variable credit up to nine hours. The Faculty approved this recommentation and all full-time CU participants chosen for the Spring Semester will receive nine hours of their credit in Independent Study 399. Thirty-one students are this semester again working on a full-time basis with ten contributing on a part-time level.

II. OBJECTIVES

From the outset, support for the program has grown, in varying degrees, from the President, some deans and department heads, and many faculty members and students. Most of those concerned with the experiment have seen this project as one way of increasing the all-too-few opportunities for undergraduate independent work at USC. In addition, the people involved with or fully aware of the CU-Independent Study concept view it as a chance for students to formulate and follow through their own ideas with a maximum of freedom. After a year's experience, the program has proven that it is not a haven for would-be dropouts, disrupters, or misfits but an enriching academic opportunity for a broad spectrum of students. Nevertheless, the novelty of this program has resulted in the large majority of the faculty and student body remaining either ignorant of its objectives or, in some cases, hostile to its concept.

Specifically, this flexible project has attempted to achieve the following objectives through independent study:

1. For the bright achieving student, it allows him to move out beyond the average student who so often dominates the classroom environment.
2. For the average student, it allows him to test and upgrade the skills he has acquired but which he has used only rarely or tentatively.

3. For the disillusioned or "turned off" student, it provides the opportunity to break through the formalism of the traditional university by working in areas which may seem more relevant.
4. For the black student, it has provided an opportunity to demonstrate his concern for those problems which seem most important to him as a black butwhich, on the whole, are ignored within the university's traditional curriculum.
5. For all participants, it offers the opportunity of what, in most cases, is the first exposure to and involvement in an interdisciplinary approach to learning.

The program, however, attempts to transcend, through Contemporary University, purely independent study. Through the efforts of a student co-ordinator and by the use of a central office in the Humanities Building, as well as a study hall in Davis, participants are encouraged to develop a group home. Although it is possible to isolate independent study as a separate matter of academic curriculum, involvement in CU has largely fulfilled a number of crucial objectives:

1. For the students suddenly catapulted from a state of maximum to one of minimum structure, CU has provided the kinds of relationships which have given many participants an identity

and security that they would not have if they were simply on their own.

2. For the student involved for the first time in research, the guidance and encouragement of both the co-ordinator and other participants have given him, often, the tools and stimulus to press on with his project when he has flagged.
3. For most participants, the CU seminars and informal contacts have provided one of the few approaches to interdisciplinary work the university can at present give.
4. For most participants, involvement in CU has also provided the only experience at university in making day-to-day decisions as well as determining broad policy directions which affect a whole group.
5. For most participants, CU has allowed them to function closely in contact with faculty in an academic environment rather than as anonymous numbers on grade rolls and computer printouts. Indeed, the reactions of the participants in CU indicate clearly that the university continues to fail to provide a community of interests between the

vast majority of students and the faculty.

Thus, whatever the failings of CU, and many of its problems stemmed from its experimental nature and lack of a defined place within the university, the experiment in building a student community has much validity.

III. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAM

A. Administration

The task of organizing the CU-Independent Study program at South Carolina initially depended upon Dean Nelson, Dean Waugh, Robert Alexander and a number of enterprising student leaders. Throughout both semesters the assistance of Dean Nelson's secretary, Mrs. Frances Blanton, has been invaluable.

The program was coordinated from Washington by Joseph Rhodes who appointed a student co-director at each of the three schools. Michael Garet, an able graduate from Cal Tech, has been the co-director at South Carolina for both semesters. From September his office on the ground floor of the Humanities Building has been the nerve center of CU. It is to that office that participants go for guidance and encouragement in their projects, for money to carry out research trips, and for services such as typing. Unfortunately, the office is very small and although Dean Nelson was able to provide them with, first, an old typewriter and, ultimately, an electric typewriter, as well as with assistance from Mrs. Blanton, CU had few resources in the first semester. In the second semester, the acquisition of a full-time secretary, as well as the use of two study halls in the basement of Davis have been very helpful. The secretary plus an administrative assistant this semester have relieved Garet of much clerical work so that he has been able to spend far more time on student projects.

Financial problems during the first semester were complicated

by the fact that all monies from Ford were disbursed through the University of Massachusetts. That situation has been changed this semester and Garet now has direct access to South Carolina's share of the Ford grant.

In the first semester, all participants were allowed a "grub-stake" of $300.00 to pay for travel expenses and other necessary costs involved in carrying out projects. Travel expenses most often involved going to Washington or Boston to work on team projects with participants from the other two participating schools. Since the program at Federal City College has totally collapsed this semester, travel expenses have fallen considerably. This semester each participant has only been granted $125.00. A budget committee of six students and the co-director has then evaluated all further requests and awarded money only where need was clearly shown. Garet himself has only been paid $4,000.00 for the two semesters while his administrative assistant earns $500.00 this semester and the secretary $1,300.00.

The administration of the program has been much smoother this semester than last. In part, this increased efficiency is the result of the group-director's having gained experience. More important, the participants this semester have a deeper sense of group identity and have played a larger role in the formulation of decisions. This cohesiveness and co-operation stem in part from a successful retreat in January at Hilton Head where participants got to know each other and gained insight into the nature

and obligations of the program.

Certain administrative procedures still need refining and tightening up. For example, methods must be devised to [redacted] discipline those few participants who have abused their access to credit cards for telephoning and for minor supply purchases. This does not mean that CU should be stultified by what might be called over-zealous administrative procedures. Obviously, if CU-Independent Study is to be continued, it must have a regularized status within the University community. But the administration, even if enlarged (as would be likely), must remain flexible.

Finally, the program was somewhat handicapped by the undefined status of the group leader. This inhibited his contacts with many faculty members who were puzzled not only as to his function, but also by the very idea of CU. Obviously, these problems of communication can be cleared up when the group leader has a defined position and when the faculty gains some understanding of the program. Indeed, in the course of our interviews, it became very clear that very few people in the University know what is going on generally across the University. Many faculty advisors and CU participants, for example, could have had mutually advantageous exchanges with other faculty and students in various department and offices, such as that of the Vice President for Student Affairs, if they had been cognizant of each other's activities.

B. Selection of Participants

Given the lack of time under which the Selection Committee worked for both the first and second semesters' program, it is remarkable that the quality of the CU participants was as high as appears to be the case. Naturally, some bias towards projects which were achievable entered into the criteria. It is, however, clear to our committee that the Nelson student-faculty ad hoc committee did examine all proposals thoroughly. Although proposals were divided among sub-committees for initial appraisal, most of the selectors, at one time or another, read all the proposals. Moreover, proposals rejected at the sub-committee stage could be, and often were, resurrected for a second consideration. Many hours were also spent interviewing applicants who were not among those few accepted or rejected outright. When the applicant was not at the meeting in person, his proposal was always referred to by a number in an attempt to introduce a greater degree of objectivity into the selection.

The selectors attempted to judge the proposals according to agreed-upon criteria, weighted in descending importance from contribution to educational experimentation through to GPR mix. This last criterion is significant in that it indicates the attempt to include students with low GPR's who otherwise showed promising potential. Indeed, part of the whole CU experiment is a conscious policy to bring in a few "under achievers" whose poor record may well stem from boredom with the traditional system and resultant lack of motivation.

Because of the haste with which the program was implemented late last spring, it is understandable that many applicants felt that they had not had time to develop a sufficiently refined proposal. This same problem arose for the second semester. The Selection Committee had to wait for recommendations from the Evaluation Committee before it knew whether or not the program would be continued for another semester. For our part, it was impossible to assemble sufficient data from interviews to make a proposal for continuance until early in December. Applicants, therefore, had only about three weeks to draw up proposals. (Perhaps this is a major reason why only seventy applications were sent in for the second semester as opposed to over one hundred for the first semester).

The Selection Committee for the second semester suffered from the fact that appraisals of the proposals coincided with final exams. As a result, faculty members as well as some students on the committee often had to be absent from many of the interviews. In our interviews, it became clear that applicants resented the lack of faculty presence on the screening committee as reducing both the stability as well as the atmosphere of objectivity to the procedures.

Clearly, if CU is to become a permanent part of the curriculum, students must have more time to prepare their projects. Only with more time can applicants refine their proposals to such an extent that the early stages of their semester of independent study will not be wasted trying to adjust their project

to manageable proportions. Only with more time will students have the opportunity to attend orientation seminars on how to prepare proposals. Also, the Selection Committee needs sufficient time to review all proposals and to interview all applicants.

It was noted by the Evaluation Committee that relatively few students in pure science or engineering applied. Apparently they were discouraged at times by their teachers who felt that they would miss adding appropriate "cubits" of knowledge by moving outside the traditional structure. Since the natural scientists so often stress the value of "research", their attitude to CU was puzzling, to say the least.

Some applicants felt that members of the student government were inordinately in evidence on the Selection Committee. However, given the active role such students played in launching the project, their dominance at the outset is understandable and justifiable. The policy of changing the composition of the Selection Committee by substituting a few participants from the first semester for some student leaders has eroded the latter's dominance. Nevertheless, a more permanent committee with a larger and wider range of both faculty and student representation is clearly desirable.

IV. EVALUATION OF STUDENT PARTICIPATION

A. Students

The evaluation of student participation in CU will be presented in two parts. In the first section objective data will be discussed on CU participants such as SAT scores, grade point average, high school rank, hours completed, hours failed, etc.. The second part will present student opinions, attitudes, and recommendations regarding their participation and their role in CU. In addition to the interview data, students were requested to judge the program overall, as compared to other college academic experiences, on a scale from one to four. Appendix A presents the summary sheet utilized in compiling personal interview data.

(1) Numerical Data:

Table I presents the intercorrelations between attitude toward Contemporary University and the various numerical scores. The results here are highly tentative because it does not include all of the participants, though data obtained since the calculating of these findings appears to follow these results quite closely.

TABLE OF INTERCORRELATIONS BETWEEN ATTITUDE TOWARD CU AND VARIOUS NUMERICAL SCORES

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	SAT Verbal	---	.55*	.55*	-.12	-.12	-.51	.05
2.	SAT Quantitative		---	.39	.22	.06	.32	.20
3.	Grade Point Average			---	.29	-.02	-.76*	.18
4.	Contemporary University, Rating of				---	.23	.08	.41*
5.	Age					---	.07	.12
6.	Hours failed						---	.21
7.	Semesters completed							---

As indicated, the table of intercorrelations is not a complete tabulation of all data. Unfortunately, incompletes and other grading delays did not permit the inclusion of grades obtained in CU in the above material. In spite of this lack, the data does provide some insight into the participants.

Many of the findings were expected but few seemed to predict what might produce a positive attitude toward Contemporary University on the part of the participating student. Significant correlations were obtained between verbal and quantitative scores on the graduate record exam. This is as expected and would duplicate findings for all students in the college. The correlation between graduate record verbal scores and hours failed indicates as expected that the higher the verbal score the fewer hours failed by the student. Quantitative graduate record scores are less predictive of either grade averages or hours failed. Of high statistical

significance, as would be expected, was the correlation between the grade point average and hours failed. Necessarily, failures greatly reduce the grade point average. These are unremarkable findings and would be true in any cross section of students' records examined. Of prime importance for this analysis is the general tendency for persons of greater maturity academically to rate CU highly. A correlation of .41 between the positive ratings for Contemporary University and the semester of the participating individual suggests that it might well be considered as a program only for upper classmen. Apparently entering the program at earlier levels, as a freshman or sophomore, is not very satisfying and perhaps would lead to less benefit from the program or possibly even failing the program.

In the following paragraphs objective data relating to Contemporary University and student characteristics will be presented.

Age: The correlation table suggests that age plays no appreciable factor in the student's attitude towards CU or in his measureable success with the program. A number of older students were entered in the program and found it highly satisfying. Younger students who had attained upper class status also tended to be successful in GPA and in personal satisfaction with the program.

Semester: As indicated from the statistical evaluation there was a high relationship between the semester of the individual and his feeling of satisfaction with Contemporary University.

This was less well born out in the grades awarded, though until an additional semester's grades are available, this factor can not be completely evaluated.

High school attended: Although not included in the numerical calculation, perusal of the information indicates that satisfaction and academic success are unrelated to the type of high school attended. The students represent a wide variety of backgrounds. Some came from very small rural high schools, while others attended the largest metropolitan schools of the state.

High school rank: As in many previous studies high school rank was highly significant in predicting the grade point average of participants in CU and may well offer some significance in predicting the grading success of the students. It did not completely predict the degree of satisfaction with CU. While in general the better student did somewhat better in the program, there were a number of high achieving, very bright students who seemed to function less effectively without a structured program. It was noted that the high school rank was much more predictive of academic performance on prior college work than were either the verbal or quantitative SAT scores.

SAT scores: As indicated from the table of intercorrelations the SAT scores were predictive of grade point average and hours passed but were unrelated to satisfaction with the CU program.

Grade Point Ratio, Hours Completed-Hours Failed: These three measures were not used as the basis for selection and had only a mild relationship with satisfaction in CU. This was in a

positive direction suggesting that there was a slight tendency for those who do better academically to be somewhat happier with the program than others. When an individual had completed a high number of hours he was supportive of a positive attitude toward Contemporary University. Prior academic failures appeared unrelated either to their attitude towards CU or their success in the grades in the Contemporary University project (as noted thus far).

Advisor Contact: Student contact with advisors ranged from very limited to continued and extensive interaction. This had a little to do with their satisfaction with Contemporary University and insufficient data is presently available to determine whether or not this greatly affected their obtained grades. Some students appeared sufficiently mature to be able to work effectively independently. Others seemed to need a close and continuing dependence on the advisor. The advisor's availability and his willingness to reinforce continuing contact appeared to be major factors in the frequency of contact.

Contacts with extended Contemporary University: Over the two semesters there have been a range of individuals who have had varying degrees of contact with the more extensive Contemporary University portion of the program, seminars and social functions. Some had essentially none, as they were off campus conducting their work. Others on campus preferred to avoid involvement in the sometimes demanding series of seminars and get togethers. Others seem to participate in Contemporary

University almost to the exclusion of completing their projects. In some instances it appeared to be an attempt to find structure that was lacking in the independent study. In other cases it was a discovery of a new learning dimension. Contact or lack thereof does not appear to be significant with regard to personal satisfaction with the program or in the obtaining of grades. Those who did not participate actively reflected that if they had been forced to participate in the activities of Contemporary University they would have been most unhappy. In several instances there was an indication that they would have preferred more participation but simply felt their directions were somewhat different from those of other participating members. A few individuals expressed concern that the Contemporary University was attempting too much cohesion and group action.

(2) Subjective Data:

In this portion the more qualitative data obtained from students will be discussed and an attempt will be made to reflect the general tenor of response by students toward the program.

General Attitude Toward Contemporary University: The attitudes expressed toward the program were excellent. Almost without exception students felt this was the most meaningful educational experience they had encountered during their entire college career. Students were asked to rate the Contemporary University experience on a four point scale with 4.0 being high. The combined ratings averaged 3.5 with many giving the rating

of 4.0. It was not that they did not find fault with some aspects of Contemporary University, but compared to other educational experiences on campus it had to be rated excellent. A number of students indicated that had such a program not been available, that they would have withdrawn from the University.

Only a few students would prefer somewhat greater structure. Most would have preferred much more extensive orientation. This seemed to be more of a problem during the first semester than in the second semester where a more formalized orientation program was offered. If it is possible to read between the lines, those students who seemed interested in developing and conceptualizing their own problems, the "problem finders," seemed to be most satisfied with CU. A few students who seemed to prefer a more structured, routinized program were less happy with the program. These "problem solvers" seemed in general less satisfied than those who were able to develop their own problems.

How would the student modify Contemporary University? All students were asked how they might seek to modify the program. As indicated elsewhere a need for better orientation was repeated again and again. It was felt that the time from acceptance to initiation of the project was far too short and that some preparatory phase was needed so that when the semester started, the individual could move immediately into his project and thus have a better chance of completing it. Many felt that because of the hurried nature of the total operation that the semester

was nearly gone before many of the routine aspects of the program were complete. Other comments from the participants related to better arrangements with advisors, more faculty resources at the disposal of CU students, additional work space, and more "multiple-member" projects. A few students would have appreciated a chance to expend their activities beyond a single semester. Many other comments were made representing individual or limited points of view. Many of these comments were related not to modifying Contemporary University but modifying the total University's attitude toward Contemporary University so that more persons could participate.

What is the relationship for a student between the extensive Contemporary University program and independent study? As has been mentioned the student group varied in its desire and willingness to have strong connections between Contemporary University and independent study activities. For some the preference would be to have a total involvement in independent study, while others would have varying degrees of balance between the two programs. Most recognized that independent studies were available at virtually every University, while only a few offered the unique and separate identity and action systems afforded by Contemporary University. For those who had returned to regular class routines and were interviewed a second time by the evaluation team, an even more positive and supportive attitude towards the whole concept of this independent study in Contemporary University had been generated. In some instances, individuals who had

relatively little to do with the extended Contemporary University portion later reported they saw benefits to participants from such activities.

What semester would be the best time for participation in Contemporary University? The students uniformly chose the later academic semesters for the best time to participate in the Contemporary University. Many who were seniors felt they were taking it at the opportune moment. Younger participants, particularly freshman and sophomores, felt that it would be better delayed until the junior or senior year. The concensus was that the second semester of the junior year or either semester of the senior year would be best to participate in Contemporary University. They based this on a desire to have some baseline knowledge with which to more effectively participate in the program.

It should be noted that every student involved in the program, whatever he felt its flaws were, would do it again and gladly. None of the students in the interview indicated that they considered it a bad experience or wished they had chosen not to participate. The enthusiasm, the effort put forth, and the meaning derived suggest the extreme value of the Contemporary University to the student. There were many student concerns. They recognized, as did the advisors, the problems relating to grading, especially with regard to evaluating participation in the extended Contemporary University program and how that might be calculated into their grade. Inspection of the grades awarded suggested this was not a large problem in spite of some breakdowns

in communication, and misunderstandings on how grades were to be awarded. There seemed to be a tendency for grades to fall toward the mean for upper class students. Some of the best students may have suffered a little in that CU grades were somewhat lower than their regular averages. In other cases there seemed to be a slight raising of grades for individuals who up to that point had not been achieving effectively. Whether this reflects a "turning on" as the result of the experience or an unwillingness on the part of advisors to award lower grades is uncertain. There is no doubt that problems do exist in grading. Such difficulties should be easily resolved as advisors become more familiar with Contemporary University and as additional guidelines are provided.

B. Advisors

During the past semesters it is clear that the advisor's role in the CU-Independent Study program has been ill-defined and unevenly carried out. In part, this is a function of the newness of the program. In part, it is a reflection of a breakdown in communication between faculty and students which is perceived not just in the CU-Independent Study program, but throughout the University.

The advisors' problems also reflected the great difficulties which they inevitably faced in such an experimental program. For example, the advisor has the primary responsibility for determining the academic acceptability of the student's project. This responsibility is most concretely demonstrated in the assignment of grades. Many advisors were extremely reluctant to be the final and, in most cases, only authority to give marks for the equivalent of five courses. Thus, a number of advisors suggested in interviews that the whole program be assessed on a pass-fail basis. For reasons discussed later, the committee is against this method.

Many advisors also soon realized they had to be more than merely resource advisors. In many cases, the student needed advice, guidance and a sympathetic ear, as well as the assurance of firm faculty support for his project. Since his relationship with the student will in large measure shape the student's experience, the conscientious advisor

simply has to give the student more than perfunctory professional advice. Indeed, if the program is to succeed, advisors must make a commitment of more time and energy then merely taking on an extra term paper. Many advisors have, in fact, devoted much time and care to participants and have gone far beyond the basis of just an appointment a week.

A number of advisors were unwilling, often for very understandable reasons, to assume such wide responsibilities. Already overworked, many faculty members protested giving so much time and energy to CU researchers without some formal University "recognition." Clearly, if the program is to be continued, some compensation must be given advisors. It is also clear that many in the faculty are not suitable, by inclination or temperament, to participate as advisors.

Another major difficulty which constantly cropped up was that advisors had no definite idea what was expected of them. They did not know whether they were to wait passively for the student to seek them out or whether they should actively guide and supervise the student. A few advisors were disillusioned when their students hardly ever sought them out or, much less, gave them progress reports. Some of these difficulties could have been resolved had there been any sort of orientation period for advisors as well as students. In fact, the advisement system can only work if the advisor realizes that he cannot merely be a passive resource to be tapped at will, but that he has very real

authority to demand of the advisee significant contact and top flight effort.

Despite such a variety of problems, the vast majority expressed strong support for the principles of Contemporary University and Independent Study, provided most of the mechanical problems and uncertainties of the program can be resolved. Their support ranged from some who envisioned an entire CU faculty within the university, to those who looked to the establishment of one member of each department as the CU coordinator for that department, through to a few who flatly opposed the program unless it were taken for no credit in an extra semester.

A number who favored the program nevertheless felt that the plunge into a whole semester of independent work was too great a gamble for students. Instead, these advisors suggested a trial semester of three hours as a basis to judge whether or not a student was capable of working outside the traditional system. The Evaluation Committee, after much reflection, rejected this suggestion. We felt that a sufficiently refined selection process would weed out most of those applicants unsuited to the full CU-Independent Study program. Moreover, a trial semester with three hours credit to work out a project might not prove anything conclusively about a candidate's ability to handle a full fifteen hours. Obviously, the majority of students at South Carolina will never be able to manage, or even desire, a semester of CU-Independent Study. However,

most advisors felt that for a significant minority the program could be very rewarding. All advisors agreed that only juniors and seniors would have the maturity and the skills to cope with such a departure from the traditional course structure.

V. CONCLUSIONS

When asked why he applied, one of the few student participants from the physical sciences replied that the CU-Independent Study for the first time allowed him both "to pose and answer" his own questions. As such, his project was the first truly creative adventure he had had at university.* Even more important, he claimed, (over and above just the project), his involvement in CU allowed him for the first time to grasp what a university experience among a community of students was all about.

Again and again in interviews participants expressed similar sentiments. Some asserted that participation gave them their first significant contact with a faculty member or faculty members. Even those who had been disappointed by the grades assigned or exasperated by some of the mechanical difficulties encountered uniformly rated their experience in the program much higher than that of a conventional semester. Many appear to have returned to the classroom in the second semester refreshed, confidant and in possession of new skills and, more important, constructive attitudes toward future work. On the whole, we concluded that the great majority have demonstrated that the time and energy they devoted to CU-Independent Study was significantly more than that which they normally put into the regular academic program. Only in a few instances were we convinced that students had entered the program because they were seeking an easy fifteen hours.

* One of the successful experiments in independent study, it should be noted, has taken place in the Chemistry Department. See Appendix B.

In some cases the program was a useful vehicle for retaining students who have already demonstrated their academic ability but have been so alienated by the university that they were ready to take the drastic step of dropping out. It should be emphasized, however, that this appears to be only a marginal function of CU since the interviews of the second semester participants indicate that only a few of them were attracted to CU primarily because of disillusionment with the existing structure. The majority sought out CU as a way to express their own creativity which had been constrained by the normal academic requirements.

If many students did not enter the program out of disillusionment, still their enthusiasm for the CU experience raised some disturbing questions about university education in general. The vast majority of participants described, sometimes without quite grasping the implications at what they were saying, their previous university experiences in terms of sheer memory work, anonymity in large classes, harassed or unconcerned teachers, and sheer boredom. All faculty members are to some extent aware of the present dilemmas of mass university education. But to spend many hours listening to students talking of their past frustrations at South Carolina was a chastening and profoundly disturbing experience for the committee. Clearly USC and, no doubt, most universities in the country are failing to give anything like what most faculty members consider to be the liberal education they had.

The large majority of faculty advisors also gave generally high support to the program, whatever reservations individuals had about one aspect or another. Many gave constructive suggestions for improving future semesters of CU-Independent Study and some of their suggestions are incorporated among our recommendations. Both advisors and the Evaluation Committee were clear that the program did not achieve its maximum potential during the academic year 1969-70. As much as anything, general ignorance of the objectives of CU-Independent Study impeded development. As well, the mechanical difficulties of selection, grading and confusion about responsibilities - inevitable in any such experimental program - resulted in much irritation and a degree of failure in the program. Nevertheless, on balance, the CU-Independent Study experiment has been evaluated by our committee as a significant success. Indeed, the administration and the university as a whole has demonstrated a flexibility and openmindedness which clearly shows how such a radical innovation can be carried through when the necessary good will and patience are present.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee strongly favours the implementation on a permanent basis of the program of Contemporary University-Independent Study provided the following recommendations can be met:

1. It is essential that both aspects of the program - Contemporary University and Independent Study - remain together and in no way bifurcated.
2. Faculty involvement should remain firm and, in some respects, increase.
   a. The present policy of choosing advisors from the general faculty should be continued. Under no circumstances should one faculty member handle more than three full-time students in the program simultaneously. For every three students advised the faculty member should be given three hours release time.
   b. Within each school or college, or where appropriate within the department, one staff member should act as a general coordinator for the CU participants, directing them to the relevant faculty. For this task, such a coordinator ought to receive one-third release time each semester.

c. In addition, it is recommended that a co-director be chosen annually by the Dean of Arts and Science from among the tenured faculty. He would facilitate communications among the administration, the faculty and the students. Substantial compensation, say one-half release time, ought to be given such a co-director.

d. To insure continuity, a student co-director ought to be chosen annually by the student-faculty steering committee from among the most promising student participants of the preceding semester. Such a co-director ought to receive the equivalent of two graduate assistantships.

3. Profound orientation ought to be instituted to improve the program.

   a. Participants should be chosen sufficiently early so that they can attend lectures and seminars on the nature and obligations of the program before their semester begins.

   b. The faculty in general must be more thoroughly informed about the program. New advisors should also attend orientation sessions directed by past advisors.

4. The present student-faculty selection and steering committee should be improved and, in some

ways, assume greater responsibilities.

a. A more representative group of students, with fewer involved directly in student government, should be on the student-faculty selection and steering committee.

b. The present committee should meet this semester to devise a democratic way to replace at least one-third of the members each semester.

c. This committee should also take steps to continue the links (next year) with the University of Massachusetts and one other university.

d. The present committee should also draw up some reasonable rules of conduct and methods for the future to discipline participants who abuse their privileges and even, where necessary, to expel students from the program.

5. The present selection process should be refined and radically changed in some ways.

a. Criteria by which to judge proposals should be clearly established before assessment begins.

b. In the actual process of selection, more faculty members must be present at the

interviews of candidates. Participants felt that faculty presence on the screening committee was desirable because it gave more stability as well as an atmosphere of objectivity to the procedures.

c. A wider range of participants should be chosen with, particularly, a few more "hard science" members.

d. A maximum of fifty full-time participants ought to be selected for next semester. No one should be full-time if he or she has a full-time job. Also, no project should be selected which is directly tied to incomeproducing activities or current employment unless such income is turned over to CU.

e. Applicants should be restricted to students in or about to enter the upper division that is to say, those with sixty earned hours or more. Moreover, anyone eligible who applies should receive the opportunity of being a part-time participant receiving at least three hours credit.

f. Applicants have been asked to submit three faculty names as references. So far no recourse has been had to such referees.

The committee should in fact ask for three letters of reference as a means of making even better selections.

6. On the thorny problem of grading, the following ideas are suggested:
   a. Only nine hours in 399 assigned to the major or cognate would be given letter grades; six hours of elective credit could then be tallied on a pass-fail basis.
   b. If the participant could be given a committee of faculty from the relevant departments with his project advisor as chairman, grading then would be a responsibility of more than one faculty member.
   c. A closer and more continuous relationship between the advisor and the participant would enable the advisor to obtain a better picture of the student's total experience throughout the semester and would allow him to assign grades on the basis of more variables than just a finished paper at the end of the semester.
   d. Whatever solution is reached about the grading procedures, it should be explicit to both the participants and the advisors

at the beginning of the semester in order to avoid confusion, disappointment and academic disaster at the end of the semester.

7. This committee recommends that the Curriculum and New Courses Committee ask the General Faculty to make permanent Independent Study 399 with variable credit up to nine hours.

8. Finally, we urge the Administration to submit a request to the Ford Foundation for continued funding of the program for at least another year. Given the increased number of participants, the amount requested should be at least double that received this past academic year.

APPENDIX A

Contemporary University

Date Form

NAME_____AGE_____SEMESTER_____

High School Attended_____High School Rank_____

SAT V._____ Q. _____ Total _____

Grade Point Ratio _____Hours Completed _____Hours Failed____

	None	Little	Occasional	Reg.	High
Advisor_____Advisor Contact	1	2	3	4	5

	None	Little	Occasional	Regular	High
Contacts with C.U.	1	2	3	4	5

Attitude Toward C.U.

How would you modify C.U.?

What is relation for you between C.U. and independent study?

How would you rate the C.U. experience for you on a four (4) point scale with 4.0 being high? _____

What semester would be the best time for this C.U. Ind. study to occur?

_____

COMMENTS:

APPENDIX B

A program of independent study has been in effect in the Department of Chemistry since 1962. At that time the curriculum was reorganized so that the senior year was made available to qualifying students for this work. Students in their junior year are invited to opt for the program. They interview faculty members in order to choose which laboratory to join. In a fair number of cases students start their work during the summer before the senior year, and thus spend a full calendar year on their projects.

Student participation in this work is highly enthusiastic. In many instances significant research contributions, resulting in publications carrying the undergraduate students as co-authors, have been made. This research experience affords the student a learning opportunity not available under a classroom situation. It usually confirms the student's ambition for a career in chemistry.

Foreign Languages has also initiated successful experiments in independent studies with French and Spanish, each allowing up to six hours credit in the senior year. The same dispensation prevails in Psychology, Geography, and Music. A number of other departments have a three-hour senior thesis and/or a senior seminar for three credits.